

***Remarks of Taralyn Fonseca
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**Before the Education Committee
On S.B. No. 24, AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS
Section 31, *Teacher Salaries Based on Certification***

February 21, 2012

Good afternoon Senator Stillman and Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Taralyn Fonseca, and I'm an Elementary teacher in Wilton. I am here today to comment on Senate Bill 24, Section 31.

This spring will complete my eighth year as an elementary school teacher. The high standards and strong education system I teach in here in the town of Wilton, Connecticut lies strongly with the teachers within the district. The aspect of Senate Bill 24 that I find the most detrimental to my profession is the new formula for salaries based on parent evaluation, standardized test scores and an administrator's review. I think that implementing this new formula versus the current salary scale a district has will lead to many problems for the future of Connecticut's children's educations.

The most disturbing part of this formula is that standardized test scores may be affecting teacher salaries. The harsh reality of public school is that there is no way for all classrooms to be fairly distributed with students who have a variety of learning needs. Strong teachers typically get students with many learning and emotional needs, and who need extra support to keep up with grade level standards. Therefore their performance on a standardized test does not always relate to a teacher's competency, but rather the ability of the individual students taking a standardized test, which may not be at their level if they are struggling students. Teachers who do not have struggling students will naturally have students with higher test scores, which in turn could increase their salaries but this does not necessarily make them better teachers at all.

Basing a teacher's salary partially on test scores could lead to teachers being desperate and dishonest with the test results of the Connecticut Mastery Test in order to potentially increase their income.

Another difficulty of this new formula is that administrators potentially will have to have a "cap" on the number of teachers who can get paid at the four different levels due to budget issues, instead of teachers being assessed and fairly evaluated and compensated. I truly believe that this formula to change teacher pay is extremely difficult if not impossible to monitor fairly based on class make-up and potential variety in having one administrator evaluate teachers at each school and give a "level."

These points come from the perspective of a teacher who is passionate about her job and goes to work every day to help each child learn in a way that makes sense to them. I feel that I am given

challenging students with both behavior and learning disabilities because of my experience, time, effort and belief in teaching an individual. However, if this law does pass many students will struggle not being in a classroom with a teacher who makes daily accommodations to help them learn. Is that what will help ensure a good educational experience for thousands of children?

Please consider my deep concerns before voting on this bill. Thank you for your time.